



Congress of Connecticut Community Colleges

Service Employee International Union (SEIU) Local 1973 – “Stronger Together!”

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Senator Haskell, Representative Haddad, Senator Flexer, Representative Turco and Members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee,

My name is Maureen Chalmers and I am the President of the Congress of Connecticut Community Colleges (4Cs), SEIU 1973, which represents over 3,500 full and part-time faculty and staff at the twelve community colleges. I am here today to testify in strong support of the following four bills that will improve the credibility, accountability and transparency of the CSCU System: SB 104, HB 5112, HB 5113, and HB 5114.

HB 5114, An Act Requiring Training for the Members of the Governing Boards of the Institutions of Higher Education in the State

Our Regents are responsible for setting tuition, approving programs, deciding on construction projects that will change the faces of our campuses, and most recently, moving forward towards merging twelve colleges into a single institution with one accreditation. Mandating training for all members of public higher education governing boards will increase their credibility.

HB 5113, An Act Requiring Legislative Approval for the Merger or Closing of Institutions Within the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities

The General Assembly used to have oversight of mergers and closures of higher ed institutions. If a closure was ever proposed, members of the public would want to voice their concerns to elected officials. Elected officials are held accountable to their constituents, but there is not that same accountability for the Regents.

HB 5112, An Act Concerning the Budget of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities

Public higher education receives a block grant appropriation, which is crucial to our operations. The BOR receives its own block grant, which totaled approximately \$400,000 in FY20 and covers the CSCU President's salary and benefits. However, the BOR spent over \$47 million in FY20.

The block grant appropriation for the BOR, CSU, Community Colleges, and Charter Oak should reflect what those institutions spend. CSCU should not have the authority to spend what the legislature appropriated to the colleges and universities. There needs to be more financial transparency in the CSCU budget.



SB 104, An Act Requiring Financial Transparency of the Students First Plan

At its February meeting, the BOR claimed to have saved \$11 million so far from this plan. It can only be assumed that these savings largely stem from attrition of faculty and staff positions because the New England Council on Higher Education (NECHE) has not yet approved a single accreditation for the “one community college with twelve campuses.” Further, the administrative reorganization has only just begun. For example, in Information Technology, all of the staff was asked to fill out a skills assessment so they can be placed in appropriate positions in the reorganization. However, there have been several consultant firms hired in relation to the planning and the costs for those contracts are unknown. Monthly reporting would help the financial transparency of the Students First/ Consolidation plan.

Good government relies on the basic principles of transparency, accountability, and credibility. Without them, there is no trust.